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The Two Australias: The Talkers Versus The Doers

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In recent decades, the Australian economy has undergone significant structural changes as the manufacturing and agricultural industries have declined and services industries have taken their place. Simultaneously, Australia has been divided into two countries, with one comprised of the elites and the other of mainstream Australians. These shifts, both economic and cultural, have undermined the Australian way of life.

This paper introduces the framework of ‘Talkers’ and ‘Doers’ and explores how the rise of the Talking class has changed the structure of Australia’s society and economy. It establishes a new theoretical framework to explain the relationship between the rise of the Talking class and declining productivity in recent years, and provides empirical evidence of this relationship in Australia.

Talkers are those who are not directly involved in the production of goods or services, who oversee companies or organisations at a high level, or who literally talk for a living. Doers are those who are directly involved in the production of goods and services, along with those who are very closely related to this production process.

The rise of the Talking class is not a benign shift, or a necessary component of the services-based knowledge economy. The rise of the Talking class has reduced Australia’s productive capacity and come at a significant economic and social cost. The Talking class has also entrenched itself and acted as a class, pursuing, at the cost of mainstream Australians, its “hegemony of cognitive class political interests”, in the words of David Goodhart.

Key findings:

- The share of Doers in the Australian workforce has declined from 84.5% in 1986 to 78.4% in 2020, while the share of Talkers has increased from 15.5% to 21.7%.
- The number of Doers per Talker has declined from 5.5 in 1986 to 3.6 in 2020.
- The rise of the Talking class has cost a cumulative \$427.7 billion in foregone economic output since 2000. This is an average of \$21.4 billion per year, roughly equivalent to the current annual Commonwealth school funding of \$21.8 billion.
- The top 10 occupations ranked by net job destruction between 1986 and 2020 were all Doing occupations, losing a total of 402,700 jobs.
- This paper develops a new theoretical framework to explain the relationship between the share of Doers in the workforce and productivity growth. It then establishes an empirical basis for this framework in Australia, and demonstrates that, historically, productivity growth has been maximised when Doers comprise 81.5% of the workforce.



The rise of the Talking class has enabled a small section of the Australian workforce to disrupt the economy, culture, and public policy settings to entrench its position and perpetuate its class interests at the expense of mainstream Australians. This raises concerns about the integrity of Australia's representative democracy and is a serious threat to the Australian way of life.

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